

Sound Beginnings Receives Award at National Meeting

*By Kim Sykes
Sound Beginnings Program*

Sound Beginnings Newborn Hearing Screening Program at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment received the “Cool for Kids” State Display Award at the National Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Conference held in Washington D.C. February 18-21. Megan Duncan, Data Manager and Kim Sykes, Audiologist/Coordinator of Sound Beginnings developed the display.



An award-winning display for KDHE's Sound Beginnings.

At this year's conference more than 50 states, territories and countries participated in the display sessions by sharing their Newborn Hearing Screening/EDHI information with the other programs and participants. Conference participants acknowledged the Sound Beginnings display as having the most useful educational handouts for parents and professionals by choosing them to receive the “Cool for Kids” award. Handouts available at their display included

information on normal speech and language development of infants and preschoolers, educational brochures, newborn hearing screening statistics and family resource guides. They also provided to each State a handout with sample physician and parent letters, resources available on the Sound Beginnings web site, and highlights of the past year's accomplishments for the program.

Duncan created the display theme “The Skies are Blue in Kansas: Optimizing Outcomes for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.” Sound Beginnings has continually received good or excellent ratings nationally for the number of newborns screened prior to hospital discharge. Provisional data for 2003 reveals that before discharge, 95 percent of infants born in Kansas have had a hearing screening. Outpatient screening for these infants should occur prior to one month of age and an audiological evaluation before three months of age. Early intervention before six months of age assures the best outcomes for infants identified with hearing loss...a life full of blue skies.



Taylor Hamon

The display would not have been complete without the assistance of a Cool Kansas Kid, five-year-old Taylor Hamon, McLouth, who loaned Sound Beginnings many of her "Dorothy Gale" prized possessions and Wizard of Oz memorabilia. Taylor is Kim Sykes' niece.

For more information on the Sound Beginnings Newborn Hearing Screening Program, contact us at 785.296.6135, 800.362.3232 (V/TTY) or visit us on the web at

www.soundbeginnings.org

For additional information for parents <http://www.babyhearing.org>

For additional information on EHDI <http://www.infanthearing.org/>

Sound Beginnings Staff Featured in Newsletter

Jill Kennedy, Data Registrar for Sound Beginnings Newborn Hearing Screening at KDHE was featured in the Great Plains Region Winter Newsletter of the Helen Keller National Center. Jill has Usher syndrome with deafness and low visual acuity. The feature is reprinted below.

What's Happening in Kansas: Spotlight on Jill Kennedy of Topeka.

What a great success story. Jill is married and has a beautiful 5-year old daughter. She also has a great job with the state of Kansas. She works for the Newborn Hearing Screening Program called Sound Beginnings. She does a variety of clerical and computer tasks. Jill has Usher syndrome.



Megan Duncan, Kim Sykes and Jill Kennedy (l-r) keep Sound Beginnings at the top of its game.

She grew up in Wisconsin, and was involved in every sport when she was in school. In 2002, when her vision reached 10 -15 degrees, she went to the Kansas Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (RCBVI). She accomplished cane travel, became skilled at public transportation and began learning Braille. Jill loves the independence she gained. She said, "I learned so much about how people can continue their lives with little or no help. It

opened my eyes to see that once I go blind, I can continue my life but with some adjustments." I would say that Jill's daughter has an incredible role model! Way to go, Jill!

For additional information on Deaf-Blindness

<http://www.hknc.org/> or <http://www.kansped.org/ksde/deafblind/deafblind.html>